

## An Answer to Prayer.

(By Rev. W. T. Worth, in 'Zion's Herald'.)

In these hard, materialistic times we are so liable to grow incredulous concerning the ability and tender oversight of our Heavenly Father, that it is well to gain strength for our faith from well-accredited events which show Him to be wonderfully near. The following account, lately given me by the lady who was the principal person in the story, is a very striking illustration of this truth; and it is vouched for by the man whose dog was God's agent in the hour of her need:

'One winter we lived on a lonely New Hampshire country road, only one large farm-house being near. One morning, the weather promising to be fair, my husband and little son left me to go to a neighboring town ten miles away, expecting to return at night. I did not mind being alone, as I was busy about the house; but toward noon, I noticed dark clouds rapidly rising, and the wind began to blow, and soon snowflakes covered the ground. Still I did not feel anxious, but kept a watchful eye down the mountain road, although I knew it was hardly time to expect my loved ones to return. The darkness came on swiftly, and the storm increased in violence, until it seemed as if the roof of the house would be torn off—every old shingle apparently vying with its neighbor in its hurry to be gone.

'Hardly daring to breathe, but longing to scream, I lighted a fire in the great fireplace, and the flames threw their ruddy glow over the room. As I began to realize that I was all alone, I grew more frightened, and I thought, 'I cannot stay here all this night alone.' Not only was the storm to be dreaded, but, early in the day, I had seen two most vicious looking men go by on their way to the village. I knew that they lived in an old shanty below us. They had called once to seek shelter from a slight shower; and, I thought, they will surely think we would give them shelter from such a storm as this. I did not know what to do, for they were never known to come away sober from the village.

'I made up my mind to go to my neighbor's house. When I opened the door the wind nearly took me off my feet, and, blinded by the snow and sleet, I hastily shut the door and went back into the lighted room. But I could not rest. I wandered from room to room, and it seemed as if I should be insane from fright, for never before had I experienced a mountain storm. I have passed through many storms since then; but that stands out with a prominence which will not allow it to be ever forgotten.

'Going to the window and peering out into the darkness, I suddenly felt prompted to pray—not for my family's return, for I hoped they were sheltered from the storm—but I prayed, 'Give me strength, O Lord, to overcome this fear!' And before I finished my prayer it was answered. Above the roar of the storm I heard, under my window, the barking of my neighbor's huge dog. I let him in, all covered as he was with snow, and he walked over to the fire, and lay down, and looked up into my face with an almost human intelligence, as if he would say, 'You needn't be afraid; I'll take care of you.' With a thankful heart I lay down and slept sweetly all night.'

'The owner of the dog told me the next day that in all the years he had owned him never had he known him leave his mat at night; but for two hours they had tried to keep him in, and at last, fearing

they would get no sleep if he stayed, they opened the door, and he bounded away into the storm toward our house.'

The lady adds: 'Now by what instinct was he guided? Did he know that the one who had fed and petted him was in deep trouble? I believe then, and believe now, that God sent him.'

Why not? Is it the first time that he has interfered for man's welfare? Some things are recorded in the Scripture which are very similar to this in some particulars. 'Is His arm shortened that He cannot save, or is His ear heavy that He cannot hear?' The 151st hymn in our standard collection contains a verse which breathes the same sentiment:

Ye winds of night, your force combine;  
Without His high behest  
Ye shall not, in the mountain pine  
Disturb the sparrow's nest.

## Where the Minister Found Help.

(By Frank Baird, in 'Forward'.)

'So the evangelists can't come to help you, you say.

Mrs. Murray stood in the study door as she spoke to her husband. He had just received his morning's mail.

'They say they have other engagements,' the minister slowly answered. There was an undertone of disappointment in his words that his wife could not help noticing.

'But you must not lose heart; they may be able to come later,' and, as she spoke, the minister's wife crossed the room and stood at his side.

He did not look up, but he spoke again: 'Not this winter, Mary; see what they say.' He handed her the letter he held in his hand. 'There is little hope of help from any quarter; we must still work along alone, I fear. And there are still so many out of Christ and the church in this place! I had looked with confidence to the coming of the evangelists, and for a large ingathering, but now—well, you see there where it all ends.'

The minister got up, walked to the window, and stood with his hands deep in his pockets, and his mind deep in thought. His wife began to read the letter. By and by she finished. Then she folded the letter, laid it on the table, and went out of the room. She was one of those persons who are wise enough to see that when a man meets a disappointment he would better be left alone with it, for a time, anyway.

The Rev. Hugh Murray was only twenty-eight, but he had been in his present charge for over two years. His course at both colleges had been exceptionally good. He had seldom met anything but success. Two months after his graduation he had received a unanimous call to one of the best congregations in two counties.

The work had progressed with general satisfaction up to within a few months. Then there seemed to have come a time when matters ceased to move forward. The contributions were less, the attendance not so large at the services, the Young People's Society still had life but lacked spirit; and there had been no additions to the church in almost a year.

It was this state of affairs that had prompted the Rev. Hugh Murray to invite to his assistance two well-known and highly-successful evangelists. It was their answer that had brought him his present disappointment.

'Surely I am doing my part,' he mused,

as he stood at the window, 'and yet why are things so low?'

To one who is always used to meeting success, anything else comes hard. This was why the young minister felt as he did. He was right in expecting success still; for he had not in the least slackened his own personal efforts. He prayed, studied, visited as usual; why, then, should this turn for the worse—for he felt it really was that—have come?

That night was the regular meeting of the Young People's Society. The minister, after the meeting was over, stated the contents of the letter he had received in the morning. Before he sat down he spoke a few earnest words. There was some sadness in them, at his own disappointment and what he knew it meant of disappointment to the society; but there was a depth of feeling in what he said that touched his young hearers. Sentiments, or words either, that come from the heart, go to the heart. If the right chord is struck it will vibrate.

It proved so that night. The minister sat down. His last words had been the wish that even yet some one might be found to come in and help.

There was a pause. The leader was rising to dismiss the meeting, when a girl of fourteen rose in one of the center seats, and began speaking in a low but clear voice:

'I think,' she said, 'I can see where we have made our mistake. We have left all the work to the minister. I think he has done all he can alone. He cannot get the evangelists he wrote for, and I believe God sent them somewhere else, because he wants us to be the evangelists and do the work that needs to be done ourselves. Don't you think we could, if we tried?'

With this, the girl sat down. Her happy thought found a ready echo in the minds of her fellow-members. One after another spoke in the same strain, each adding something new. Before the meeting closed every member of the society had volunteered to pray earnestly, and work faithfully, that those still outside of Christ and the church might be brought in.

Through it all the minister sat silent. He heard the details arranged for personal work. He saw the enthusiasm, and he knew it meant success. From the moment the girl's voice had uttered those words, he felt his helpers had come—they had been with him all the time, and he had failed until to-night to enlist them. He saw his mistake in this answer to his prayer for help and helpers. He had come to the meeting with some hard thoughts as to why God should disappoint him; but now these thoughts were swept away in a great flood of love for him who had given that thought to the girl. It had been one of those things hid from the wise and prudent, but revealed unto babes.

The next meeting of the society was the largest and best in its history. The whole community was moved. The young evangelists did their work faithfully and well. Instead of being one against almost a thousand, the minister had little more to do than to allow himself to be borne along. God had started the movement through a young girl, but he carried it on in the power of his Spirit. God was in it from the first, and it could not fail. In four weeks from the time the young people took their resolve, thirty-seven persons, old and young, had been brought to Christ and received into the church.

A fortnight's beer would place a bible in the hands of every family in the world.